Legal HQT requirements for Students with IEPs lowa's Collaborative Teaching Model

No Exceptions

All students with individualized education programs (IEPs) are guaranteed access to "highly qualified" teachers (HQT) under No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. Under HQT legislation, students with IEPs, except those assessed against alternate standards, are guaranteed access to a teacher who has expertise in core content. In Iowa, that expertise equals core content endorsement. Special education teachers whose students are expected to achieve alternate assessment standards are considered highly qualified if they hold a special education endorsement appropriate to the needs of their students.

Application to Teachers

The HQT requirements apply to elementary special education teachers and middle and high school special education teachers who teach one or more core academic subjects including English, reading, language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics, government, economics, arts, history, and geography.

Models of Service

Instruction in core content can be provided to students with IEPs by a special education teacher if he or she carries the appropriate endorsement or through Iowa's collaborative model which can take the form of co-teaching or consultation.

Co-Teaching Model *

Co-teaching takes place when the general education and special education teachers are physically present in a heterogeneous classroom with joint and equal responsibility for classroom instruction. The Iowa Department of Education recommends co-teaching training for both teachers prior to implementing the co-teaching model.

Consultative Model

The IDEA highly qualified teacher "consultative" model, in the vast majority of cases, calls for students with IEPs to receive their content instruction from a teacher endorsed in the content area (math teacher for math, etc.). The special education teacher serves as a consultant to the general education teacher in such areas as IEP goal attainment, specially designed instruction, accommodations, progress monitoring, remediation for the student, etc. The special education teacher also provides strategy and skill instruction, preteaching, reteaching, and/or remediation to the student in a separate setting when needed.

In a very few cases (typically students with significant cognitive disabilities and some students with behavioral disabilities), the "reverse consultation" model is allowed in which the core content teacher serves as a content consultant to the special education teacher. This determination should be made by the IEP team and should only be used for a small percentage of students with IEPs (a general guideline is that only about 10 to 15 percent of students with disabilities should be receiving their content instruction through reverse consultation).

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^{*} Important Note: In Iowa, paraeducators (associates) do not "co-teach" in that they are not licensed staff. They can support general or special education teachers in providing services to students with IEPs in both the co-teaching and consultative models.

Reverse consultation is not a way for a district to "option out" of the student receiving content instruction from an endorsed teacher. Iowa's policy requirement, in accordance with IDEA and NCLB, specifically states:

A special education teacher who teaches any of these [core] academic areas must have the state-required endorsement for the subject area, or the academic subject (curriculum) must be considered under the supervision of a teacher who is licensed appropriately for the academic area. (Kevin Fangman, Administrator, Division of PK-12 Education, 2008-09 NCLB Letter of Guidance).

Subsequently, in reverse consultation, the general education teacher is "supervising" the curriculum by assigning the student's content grade, providing content strategies and assessments, problem-solving concept attainment, etc. He or she works in partnership with the special education teacher and is as responsible for the curriculum as if the student were in his or her classroom.

In either case (typical or reverse consultation), general and special education teachers must have "regular and frequent" consultation.

Additional documentation

For the small percentage of students with IEPs who are receiving their content instruction through the reverse consultation model, additional documentation is necessary. Any district-employed teacher appropriately endorsed in the content area can serve as the teacher who is supervising the content curriculum as long as he or she is performing the duties outlined under Iowa's collaborative teaching model. The name of the teacher who is supervising the curriculum must be listed somewhere in a permanent file of the student. It can be a transcript, report card, permanent record, etc. Ideally, both teachers' names should be included in the documentation. The order of teachers listed is not important. General and special education teachers should be viewed as equal partners in meeting the content and special education needs of students. If district software that manages grade transcripts and/or report cards can only list one teacher's name, the core content teacher's name must be listed. The district needs to be able to produce the documentation of the teacher supervising the curriculum upon request.

Documentation of regular and frequent consultation is also necessary for all forms of the consultative model. The DE does not provide requirements regarding the frequency and duration of consultation or a specific document where the documentation should be kept; however, the district needs to be able to produce documentation upon request and both teachers (general education and special education) should be able to articulate, if interviewed, how often they met, specific examples of supports provided to each other such as specially designed instruction or content strategies shared, how the student progressed in the general education curriculum and in his or her goal areas, and other related information.